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IT AINT MY FAULT

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

BY

KATHARINE KAVANAUGH

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SOME NEW PLAYS

★**MOLLY BAWN. 35 cents.** A comedy drama in 4 acts, by MARIE DORAN. 7 male, 4 female characters (or by doubling, 5 male and 3 female). Time, about 2 hours. Based upon incidents from a story by "The Duchess." The story is woven about Eleanor Masserene (*Molly Bawn*), whose mother eloped with a young Irishman, which has so embittered her grandfather that he disinherited her. After many years of loneliness he sends for *Molly*. How the coquettish heiress wins the hard, old man, is worked out in the play sometimes in a comedy setting and again in strong dramatic tenseness. \$10.00 royalty per performance by amateurs.

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★**MADAME G. WHILKENS' BEAUTY PARLOR. 25 cents.** An original entertainment in 2 acts, by VIOLA GARDNER BROWN, for 12 (or less) female characters. 1 interior scene. Time if played straight about 50 minutes. A very comical travesty on a beauty parlor during a busy day. Introducing among others, French, Irish, colored, rube character, two salesladies, all strongly contrasted.

IT AIN'T MY FAULT

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By

KATHARINE KAVANAUGH

Author of "A Gentle Touch," "A Stormy Night," "The Wayfarers," "A Bachelor's Baby," "A Converted Suffragist," "The Four Adventurers," "A Friendly Tip," etc.

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It Ain't My Fault

CHARACTERS

MADAME DEKALB.....*Principal of the DeKalb School*
ELISE MORTON.....*Pupil at the DeKalb School*
NETTIE SMITH.....*The new pupil*
TOM CHESTER.....*Nettie's fiancé*
JIMMIE BLAKE.....*The reporter*
NOAH LOTT.....*Country boy who just "does things"*

TIME.—The present.

LOCALITY.—Any suburban town.

TIME OF PLAYING.—About forty-five minutes.

SYNOPSIS

JIMMIE BLAKE, a reporter from *The Inquirer* tries to get an interview at the DeKalb School with ELISE MORTON, daughter of a Wall Street celebrity, who has apparently disappeared. JIMMIE is at a loss as to how to meet MISS MORTON; he speaks to NOAH, who is on his way to meet the new pupil, NETTIE SMITH, but is too late as usual. NETTIE arrives accompanied by her fiancé, TOM, who convinces her that she will be happier as his wife than in school. JIMMIE overhears their discussion and also discovers that NETTIE's bag and his are similar, and he exchanges them. TOM's description of his bungalow finally wins NETTIE and she agrees to elope; they immediately go for the marriage license. Later JIMMIE appears wearing NETTIE's garments and posing as the new pupil, thus gaining an interview with ELISE, who tells him where her father is. General mix-up when NETTIE and TOM return and discover the mistake made in the bags. JIMMIE then appears in his own clothes and straightens out matters. To win ELISE's friendship he destroys his report to *The Inquirer*.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

MADAME DEKALB, principal of the DeKalb School for Young Ladies. A woman of about 45, prim and precise in dress and manner.

ELISE MORTON, a young girl of 18, good looking and refined. Wears any appropriate afternoon dress.

NETTIE SMITH, a young girl of 18, who is asked to decide between school and matrimony. Wears a pretty summer dress and hat.

TOM CHESTER, a young man of 22. Wears a neat business suit.

JIMMIE BLAKE, a bright, alert young man, about 22, an amateur actor and member of the Paint and Powder Club. Wears a neat business suit. He must be about the same build as NETTIE, as he appears in Nettie's hat and dress, etc.

NOAH LOTT, a country boy who just "does things." About 20 years. His specialty is playing the mouth organ and his chief characteristic is being late. Wears dowdy-looking clothes.

INCIDENTAL PROPERTIES

Two suitcases or traveling bags almost similar. One contains NETTIE's shoes, dress, hat, etc., the other contains JIMMIE's trousers, shaving set, etc.

Traveling bag, cigarettes, telegram and a dollar bill for JIMMIE.

Newspaper for ELISE.

Mouth organ for NOAH.

STAGE DIRECTIONS

As seen by a performer on the stage, facing the audience, R. means right; L., left; C., center of stage. UP means toward back of stage; DOWN, toward footlights.

It Ain't My Fault

SCENE.—*Exterior of the DeKalb School for Young Ladies. A September afternoon. Set house R. with an entrance into the house. Wood wings L., allowing for an exit at L. Bench DOWN L. Landscape drop in rear.*

ENTER JIMMIE BLAKE L., *carrying traveling bag.*

JIMMIE (*sets bag on stage about C. and looks at house R.*). Well, this is the place all right—Madame DeKalb's School for Young Ladies. But how in the world Jimmie Blake, reporter on *The Inquirer*, is going to get inside those doors, is another proposition. (*Takes out a cigarette and proceeds to light it*) Well, I'll hang around—something might turn up—I've simply got to interview Miss Elise Morton or lose my job—that's all.

ENTER *from back of house*, NOAH *playing mouth organ.*

JIMMIE (*calls*). Hey—you! (NOAH *stops*)

NOAH (*turns to look at JIMMIE*). Don't you say "hay" to me. I ain't no horse.

JIMMIE. Come here, I want to speak to you.

NOAH. That ain't my fault. Do I have to come there for you to speak to me? I ain't hard o' hearing.

JIMMIE. Do you see this school here?

NOAH. 'Course I see it. I ain't blind, nuther.

JIMMIE. Well, I want to get in there.

NOAH. Ye can't, you darned fool—that school's for young ladies.

JIMMIE. You misunderstand me. I want to get in there to see a young lady.

NOAH. No men visitors allowed, unless they're related. Who are you, anyhow?

JIMMIE. I'm a newspaper reporter.

NOAH. No book agents, newspaper reporters, peddlers nor dogs allowed. You ain't got a chance.

JIMMIE. Who are you?

NOAH. My name's Noah.

JIMMIE. Noah—what?

NOAH. Noah Lott.

JIMMIE. And what is your position here?

NOAH. My what?

JIMMIE. Your position—your job?

NOAH. Oh, I ain't got no regular job—I just “does things.”

JIMMIE. I see—a sort of general utility man?

NOAH. Yeh—whatever that is. I runs errands, goes for the mail—takes care of baggage—and so forth and et cetera. Besides all that, I'm organizer and leader of the village orchestra.

JIMMIE. What instruments do you play?

NOAH. Mouth organ and Jew's harp. Want to hear me play “There's a Land That is Brighter Than This”?

JIMMIE. No—I'll take your word for it. Do you know if Miss Elise Morton is a pupil in this school?

NOAH. Sure—she's our star pupil.

JIMMIE. Well, I'll give you a dollar if you can get Miss Morton out here and introduce me to her.

NOAH. I'd like to earn that dollar, but it can't be did.

JIMMIE. Why not?

NOAH. I'd lose my job. (*Starts off toward L.*)

JIMMIE. Where are you going now?

NOAH. To the dee-pot to meet a new pupil. I'm late now—got to hurry. If that train gets in before I make it, it won't be my fault.

[EXITS *slowly, L., playing mouth organ*

JIMMIE. Now, how in the world am I going to get

that interview? I can't go back to the office without it. (*Takes telegram from pocket and reads*) "Big Wall Street deal on. Henry Morton at head of it. Can't be located. Get interview with daughter at DeKalb School. Learn whereabouts of her father." (*Replaces telegram in pocket*) Yes—that's easier said than done. I'll take a look at the back of the house—maybe I'll stumble into luck. (*Takes bag*) [EXITS R., *behind house*]

ENTER from L., MISS NETTIE SMITH and TOM CHESTER.
He carries her traveling bag, and places it R., next to house.

NETTIE. Well, here we are—that must be the school.

TOM. Yes, here we are—but why you insist on coming to this stupid school, when this is our one chance to be married, I don't understand.

NETTIE. I had to come, Tom. (*TOM and NETTIE go DOWN stage, L.*)

TOM. I don't see why. There was no one at the station to meet you. They don't seem to expect you here. Why not take this opportunity? We can get the license in the next town, go to the minister's and be married before they learn where we are. (*JIMMIE comes from behind house, still carrying his traveling bag. Sees NETTIE and TOM, steps back behind house, but is seen to be listening*)

NETTIE. Well, then what shall we do?

TOM. We'll go right back home and tell them we are married.

NETTIE. What will Mother say?

TOM. What can she say, but "Bless you, my children." Your mother likes me, and your father admitted himself that I'm no slouch in business, so what's all this fuss about anyway?

NETTIE. But Mother thinks I'm too young to be married.

TOM. Your mother and my mother have said time and time again that they were married when they were

seventeen. What's the sense in your spending four more years at school? That's all right for a girl that's going to make her own living, but I'm making enough now to take care of you, even if I am what my Dad calls "a fresh youngster."

NETTIE. And shall we live with your people or with mine?

TOM. With neither. None of that for us. We are going to have our own home from the start. I've got our house —

NETTIE (*delighted*). Oh, Tom, have you?

TOM (*sits on bench L.*). Come here, let me tell you about it. (NETTIE *sits beside TOM. JIMMIE ventures from behind house, looks at NETTIE'S traveling bag and notices with surprise that it looks very much like his. He goes cautiously down to NETTIE'S bag, places his alongside of it, looks toward NETTIE and TOM, sees that they are engrossed with each other, takes NETTIE'S bag and leaves his bag in its place, and EXITS behind the house*)

NETTIE. Go on, I want to hear about the house.

TOM. Well, it has honeysuckle and morning-glory vines in the back yard, and on the lawn in front there's a hydrangea in full bloom —

NETTIE. But the house, Tom, what does it look like?

TOM. It's a bungalow, with a slanting roof and low, broad windows. It is painted a light shade of buff with dark red trimmings. On the south side there is a porch screened by rose-bushes.

NETTIE. Oh, Tom, you talk like a real estate agent.

TOM. And the best of it is—it's ours.

NETTIE. Ours! Not—not —

TOM. Yep—paid for—it's our home, waiting for us to come to it. Now, Nettie, you're not the kind of girl that would disappoint a nice house like that?

NETTIE. Where is it, Tom?

TOM. About sixty feet beyond the city limits on the prettiest road in the State.

NETTIE. Outside the city limits?

TOM. Yep—County taxes, child. All the conveniences of the city without the expense. Didn't I tell you I was a business man?

NETTIE. Have you been asking me to marry you—or trying to sell me a house—I'm all mixed up.

TOM. I'm asking you to marry me—the house is thrown in for good measure—a sort of a premium.

NETTIE. Oh, that sounds enticing.

TOM (*rises, and speaks in business tone*). It's a bargain, Madam. One of the best bargains on the market to-day. You had better accept it before another buyer comes along.

NETTIE (*rising, and laughing*). I accept—house and all. Shall we furnish it right away?

TOM. Furnish it! My dear young lady, you didn't think I was offering you an unfurnished house, did you? Everything is ready to start housekeeping —

NETTIE (*delighted*). No!

TOM. Yes! There is the kitchen, to begin with. It has all the latest appliances. Then there is the dining-room, furnished entirely in Mission. The reception-hall is done in mahogany —

NETTIE (*laughing*). Please, Tom—I'm yours—let's find that minister.

TOM. Nettie—do you mean it?

NETTIE. I do.

TOM. Hurrah! (*Offers his arm to NETTIE*) I knew that house would do the trick. Where's your bag? Oh, here it is. (*Picks up bag, and as they go off L., TOM continues to talk*) Then there's the cutest little library, all stacked with the books I know you like, and an easy-chair upholstered in leather—and then up-stairs there's — (*Until well off stage*)

[EXIT TOM and NETTIE L.]

ENTER JIMMIE from behind house with NETTIE's bag.

Puts it down and looks at it without opening it.

JIMMIE. Now, what under the sun made me do that wild trick? Lordy, but that young lady is going to be

surprised when she opens that bag of mine. Good heavens, my shaving outfit and a change of linen are in it, and a pair of pajamas. (*Laughs*) I'd like to be there when they open it. Well, I don't know whether I can get away with it, but I am going to get into some of these feminine things and impersonate the new pupil. I didn't play two seasons with the Paint and Powder Club for nothing. But where—where will I do the trick? (*Looks off R.*) Ah, there's a big red barn back there that will do very well for a dressing-room.

[EXITS R., *behind house with bag*]

ENTER *from house*, MADAME DEKALB, *looks off L.*

MME. DEKALB (*seems worried*). I wonder what can be keeping Noah. I heard the whistle of the train some time ago. I do hope nothing has happened to our new pupil.

ENTER ELISE MORTON *from house*. *She carries a newspaper.*

ELISE. Hasn't Miss Smith arrived yet, Madame?

MME. DEKALB. No, Miss Morton, and I am beginning to be worried.

ELISE. Shall I go to the station and inquire?

MME. DEKALB. Oh, my dear Elise, not *you*.

ELISE. Why not? Besides, I should like to send a wire to my father.

MME. DEKALB. Why are you telegraphing your father?

ELISE (*shows newspaper in her hand*). I want to find out if this article in the paper is true. Here is what it says: (*Reads*) "There is every indication of an important deal taking place in Wall Street in the next few days. Henry Morton is at the head of it, but Mr. Morton is purposely keeping out of sight until the deal is consummated. Every effort is being made by the newspapers to get some clue to his whereabouts."

MME. DEKALB. Then, my dear, it would not be wise

for you to communicate with your father, since it is his desire to keep his whereabouts unknown. The success of this business deal may depend on secrecy, and, who knows, one of these inquisitive newspaper men may be watching you for just such a move on your part.

ELISE. Nonsense. Do you really think so?

MME. DEKALB. A newspaper reporter will go to any lengths in order to get a story, especially about a Wall Street celebrity like your father.

ELISE. Oh, I'm not really worried about Father. I am quite sure he is at our country place. He always goes there when he wants to hide. Well, perhaps I had better not wire.

ENTER NOAH, L., *playing mouth organ*.

MME. DEKALB. Here is that stupid boy now. Well, Noah, where is Miss Smith?

NOAH. I dunno. She warn't there when I got to the deepot. It ain't *my* fault.

MME. DEKALB. Well, well, did you get there in time?

NOAH. Yes, I got there in time, but the train got there first. You see, yestiddy Joe Martin borrowed my Jew's harp, and I stopped on my way to git it back. It ain't *my* fault.

MME. DEKALB. In the meantime Miss Smith had arrived and there was no one to meet her.

NOAH. Well, it warn't my fault. How did I know that old train was going to git there before I did?

MME. DEKALB. Did you make any inquiries at the station about the young lady?

NOAH. Sure. The station agent said there was a young lady got off with a young man. Doggone it, it ain't *my* fault.

MME. DEKALB. (*shocked*). With a young man.

ELISE (*laughs*). The plot thickens.

NOAH. And they started to walk to the school.

MME. DEKALB. Then they should have arrived before you.

NOAH. Sure. Almost anybody could arrive before me. It ain't *my* fault.

MME. DEKALB. But she is not here.

NOAH. Ain't she here yet?

MME. DEKALB. No.

NOAH. Well, 'tain't my fault.

MME. DEKALB. What do you make of it, Elise?

ELISE. I am sure I don't know, Madame. It seems the young lady should be here.

ENTER JIMMIE, *in a girl's costume, from behind house.*

NOAH. Hello, who's this? (ELISE and MME. DEKALB *turn in surprise*)

MME. DEKALB. Oh, there you are, Miss Smith?

JIMMIE. Yes, here I am—I am.

MME. DEKALB. We have been awfully worried. Why did you not enter the school as soon as you arrived?

JIMMIE. Well, you see, I was—er—trying to find the door.

MME. DEKALB (*surprised*). *Trying to find the door!* Why, there it is before your eyes.

JIMMIE. Well, so it is. Do you know, I've been looking all around this house for that blamed thing, and couldn't find it. (MME. DEKALB and ELISE *look at each other in surprise*)

MME. DEKALB (*sternly*). Now that you have discovered the door, will you be kind enough to enter it? I will show you to your room.

JIMMIE. Mayn't I be introduced to the young lady first? (*Indicates ELISE*)

MME. DEKALB. Most certainly. Miss Elise Morton, Miss Nettie Smith.

JIMMIE (*gushingly, takes ELISE's hand*). Oh, Miss Morton, I hope we are going to be friends—let me call you Elise, won't you —

ELISE (*amused*). Yes, if you like.

JIMMIE (*puts handkerchief to his eyes*). Oh, I feel

so lonely—I've never been away from home before. Please, may I kiss you?

ELISE (*laughs, but draws away*). When we know each other better, Miss Smith.

JIMMIE. Oh, haven't you lovely hair, and such soft white hands, and your eyes—I just love your eyes.

ELISE (*laughs*). You flatter me too much.

MME. DEKALB (*sternly*). Miss Smith, I do not approve of so much sentimental gush in my pupils.

JIMMIE. Oh, please don't find fault with me. If you do, I'll cry. (*Tries to cry on ELISE's shoulder, but ELISE draws back*)

MME. DEKALB. Noah—get the young lady's bag. Come, Miss Smith, I will show you to your room.

JIMMIE. Aren't you coming, Elise?

ELISE. Yes, presently. (EXIT MME. DEKALB *into house, followed by JIMMIE*. JIMMIE *tries to imitate the walk of a young lady, and ends by clumsily falling in the door*)

JIMMIE (*as he falls*). Oh, damn! (*Rises quickly*)

[EXITS *into house*

ELISE (*shocked, says to NOAH*). Noah, did you hear what Miss Smith said?

NOAH (*picks up the traveling bag*). I sure did, but 'tain't my fault.

ELISE. Of course it isn't, but isn't she a peculiar girl!

NOAH (*starts toward the house with bag*). Huh! All girls is peculiar, if you ask me.

[EXITS *into house with bag*

ELISE. Just the same—there is something odd about that girl.

ENTER JIMMIE *from house, quickly*.

JIMMIE. Oh, Miss Morton, you're still here. I was afraid you'd be gone. I gave the old dame the slip——

ELISE (*shocked*). Miss Smith! I must say I'm shocked at your manner of speaking.

JIMMIE. Oh, that's all right—you'll get used to it after a while. (*Unconsciously tries to put his hands in vest pockets to look for cigarette*). Say, do you mind if I smoke? (*Realizes he is wearing a dress*) Oh, hang it, I forgot!

ELISE. Smoke! Miss Smith, you don't mean to say that you *smoke*!

JIMMIE. Sometimes—when I have the makings.

ELISE. Well, you had better not let Madame DeKalb hear you say such a thing. Nice girls don't smoke.

JIMMIE. Well, maybe I'm not a nice girl.

ELISE. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but I only meant to warn you.

JIMMIE. Oh, I know that. Why, you're the sweetest girl in the world. Don't you think I can see that? I got stuçk on you the moment I laid eyes on you.

ELISE. Then I wish you would get over it quickly. I don't care for such wholesale admiration.

JIMMIE. Won't you please let me care for you? You don't know how much it would mean to me.

ELISE (*relenting*). Well, of course, I don't want to be unkind, especially as this is the first time you have been away from home, and seem in such need of a few refining influences. (*Sits on bench L.*)

JIMMIE. Yes, I do need refinement, I admit.

ELISE. Where did you pick up such awful habits, such as smoking and swearing?

JIMMIE. Oh, Miss Morton, I didn't swear, did I? (*Sits on bench*)

ELISE. You certainly did, when you fell up the steps.

JIMMIE. It must have slipped. I'm sorry. Won't you please be friends?

ELISE. Of course, but you'll have to be a different girl.

JIMMIE (*crosses one knee over the other*). I'll be any kind of a girl you say. Only just let me tell you how much I care——

ELISE (*with horror, draws back*). Miss Smith, you've been smoking!

JIMMIE. How do you know?

ELISE. I can smell it on your breath—and your clothes seem saturated with it. Now, if I notice this again I shall have to report you to Madame DeKalb.

JIMMIE (*sniffing*). Oh, I'm so unfortunate. All I want in the world is for you to care for me, and—you don't.

ELISE. My dear girl, you mustn't feel that way about it. I do like you.

JIMMIE (*with his back turned, and pretending to be crying*). No—you—don't.

ELISE (*lays her hand on his shoulder*). But I do—really, I like you very much. (*Notices JIMMIE's short hair under the small hat*) Why, Miss Smith, what have you done to your hair?

JIMMIE. What's the matter with it?

ELISE. It is so short.

JIMMIE. Oh. You see I've had typhoid, and they cut it off while I was sick.

ELISE. Oh, wasn't that a pity!

JIMMIE. That's why I wear this hat all the time.

ELISE. Oh, I understand.

JIMMIE. What's that in your hand—a newspaper?

ELISE. Yes. It has an article about my father.

JIMMIE. Oh, dear, he isn't in trouble, is he?

ELISE. No indeed. The silly newspapers are trying to find out where he is.

JIMMIE. Don't you know where he is?

ELISE. Well, I can guess. Dad has a habit of slipping down to a shore he owns on the Severn River whenever he wants to get away from business for a few days. There's splendid fishing down there, and he usually has a good time.

JIMMIE. His shore on Severn River. No wonder they couldn't locate him.

ELISE. Why—do you know anything about it?

JIMMIE. No—I just remember now of seeing it in the paper.

ELISE. Well, I'm going in—this is my hour for

study. Are you coming, Miss Smith? (*Crosses to house*)

JIMMIE. Yes, but first I would like to send that boy Noah to the station with a telegram.

ELISE. Wait here—I'll send him to you.

[EXITS *into house*]

JIMMIE. I've got to get my bag back somehow, jump into my own clothes and beat it to the station. That boy don't look as if he had much sense, but maybe I can bribe him with a dollar.

ENTER NOAH *from house*.

NOAH. You want to see me, lady?

JIMMIE. See here, Noah, I want my bag—can you get it for me?

NOAH. Why, I just took it up-stairs.

JIMMIE. Well, you just bring it down again—or wait, there's a window in the rear of the house—get the bag and drop it out the window. I'll be there to catch it.

NOAH. What do you want it for?

JIMMIE. None of your business. Here's a dollar. (*Gives him a dollar*) Now, get a move on and do as I tell you before your brain stops working. (*Pushes him into house, through door*) Whew! I wonder if he has sense enough to do it. Back to the barn for me, into my own clothes, and I'll be a man again.

[EXITS *quickly behind house*]

ENTER MADAME DEKALB *and* ELISE *from house*.

MME. DEKALB. Where is she—where is that girl?

ELISE. I left her here a moment ago. What is the matter, Madame?

MME. DEKALB (*excitedly*). The matter! The matter! Something scandalous has happened—nothing like it has ever occurred in my establishment before.

ELISE. But what is it—please tell me.

MME. DEKALB. When the housemaid opened the new pupil's bag to unpack her things she almost fainted —

ELISE. What was in the bag—a snake?

MME. DEKALB. Worse—much worse—a pair of trousers!

ELISE. Good gracious! What did the maid do?

MME. DEKALB. She put them back into the bag and ran screaming from the room. Now where—I ask you *where*—did that girl get those trousers?

ELISE. I'm sure I don't know.

ENTER NOAH *from house*.

MME. DEKALB (*walking back and forth excitedly*). This needs an explanation! Where is she—where is she! Noah, have you seen the new pupil?

NOAH. Yes, ma'am.

MME. DEKALB. When and where?

NOAH. She was back near the barn, smokin' a cigarette.

MME. DEKALB (*shocked*). Smoking a cigarette! Oh, disgraceful!

NOAH. Well, it ain't *my* fault. And she gave me a dollar to throw her bag out the back window!

MME. DEKALB. Gave you a dollar! And you took it?

NOAH. Sure! I wasn't goin' to throw it out for nuthin'.

MME. DEKALB. Do you dare tell me that you went to her room and threw her bag out the window?

NOAH. Sure. It didn't hurt the bag none—she caught it all right. She's pretty slick for a girl.

ENTER *from L.*, NETTIE SMITH *and* TOM CHESTER.

NETTIE (*to MADAME DEKALB*). Is this Madame DeKalb?

MME. DEKALB. Yes, I am Madame DeKalb. Who are you?

NETTIE. I am Nettie Smith, the new pupil.

MME. DEKALB (*draws back in amazement*). You are—who?

NETTIE (*seems surprised at everybody's amazement*).

I am Nettie Smith, the new pupil. Is there anything so amazing in that?

ELISE (*startled*). *You are Nettie Smith?*

NETTIE. Why—yes. I think I am. But everybody seems to doubt it.

MME. DEKALB (*sternly to NOAH*). *Then who is that other girl?*

NOAH. How do I know? It ain't my fault!

TOM. I say, have we thrown a bomb, or anything? What's all the excitement about?

MME. DEKALB. You must excuse us, Miss Smith, but there is a girl here calling herself by your name and representing herself as the new pupil.

NETTIE. Then she is an imposter. Where is she?

MME. DEKALB. The last I heard of her, she was behind the barn smoking a cigarette.

NETTIE. Terrible. And she dares to use my name? What does it mean?

MME. DEKALB. I'm sure I don't know. (*Turns to NOAH*) Noah, did you notice any stranger around the school to-day?

NOAH. Well, there was a newspaper fellow that wanted to see Miss Morton — It ain't my fault.

ELISE. A reporter—could it have been —

NETTIE. But you said he was a girl—or she was a girl—or it was a girl—where did it get the clothes?

MME. DEKALB. Miss Smith, I'm beginning to have an idea. Open your bag.

TOM (*has the bag in his hand, puts it on floor and opens it*). Wait, I'll unfasten it for you. (*Everybody crowds around the bag while TOM unfastens it*)

NETTIE (*looks into it, and then screams*). Oh!

MME. DEKALB. What is the matter?

NETTIE. Look! (*Holds up pair of pajamas*. MME. DEKALB *screams*. NETTIE *throws them back in bag*) It is full of men's things—there is a shaving outfit.

TOM. Nettie, look again. Is that your bag?

NETTIE. No. It looks like it, but it isn't. I've got somebody else's bag.

TOM. And somebody else has yours. Where is this new pupil? I'll handle *him*. (*Squares his shoulders, ready to fight*)

ENTER JIMMIE *from behind house, in his own clothes, and carrying the other bag.*

JIMMIE (*pauses in an embarrassed manner*). Er—good morning!

MME. DEKALB (*sternly*). And who are you, sir?

JIMMIE. Why—I'm a book agent—can I show you the latest edition of Shakespeare—Morocco-bound——

ELISE (*after looking at him, screams*). Oh!

TOM (*up close to JIMMIE in threatening manner*). So you are Miss Nettie Smith, eh?

JIMMIE. I was. Who are you?

TOM. I am Miss Smith's future husband, and I think I owe you a thrashing.

JIMMIE (*looks toward NETTIE*). I beg Miss Smith's pardon, and (*To TOM*) I'll give you that scrap whenever you want it. Now, I'll explain anything you don't already know. I was sent here by my paper to interview Miss Morton. I overheard Miss Smith and this scrappy guy planning to elope. I changed the bags because they looked so much alike, and as I have played girl parts before, I determined to impersonate the new pupil. What kind of a girl was I, Miss Morton?

ELISE. How dare you speak to me! I suppose you think you have done a very clever thing.

JIMMIE. No, I'm not very proud of myself, and I really do seriously beg your pardon. Won't you forgive me?

ELISE. Never. I admit I was very stupid not to see through you at first. Now you may send your report to your paper. The fact that it would hurt my father and me doesn't matter.

JIMMIE. Yes, it does. I want your friendship, and to prove it I am going to tear up this report. (*Takes report from pocket and tears it up*) It will lose me my job, but I guess I'll get another one.

TOM (*shakes hands with JIMMIE*). Say, I'll take it back about the scrap. You're all right.

NETTIE. If Tom forgives you, I'll forgive you too. Tom and I just came back to notify you, Madame DeKalb, that we have secured a marriage license, and are on our way to the minister's.

TOM. And we want two witnesses. Miss Morton, will you forgive this chap and help us out?

ELISE (*relenting*). I don't know the gentleman's name.

JIMMIE (*smiling, holds out his hand to ELISE*). It's Jimmie Blake, and right at this moment I'm the happiest fellow in the world. (*Clasps ELISE's hand*) Will you come, Miss Morton?

ELISE (*smiles*). If Madame DeKalb consents.

MME. DEKALB. Well! I don't seem to have anything to say.

NOAH (*to JIMMIE*). Say, maybe I ain't got much sense, nor nuthin', but you can't fool me. *You ain't no girl!* (*Everybody laughs*)

MME. DEKALB (*to NOAH*). You stupid boy. If you had been on time at the station all this would not have happened!

NOAH (*C. of stage*). Aw, I git blamed for everything! IT AIN'T MY FAULT! (*Everybody laughs*)

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